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Edition 2012, version 1

## The Third Issue

# Umar ibn al-Khattab

(May Allah be pleased with him)

**The Series of: Men and Women Around Muhammad**

*(prayers and peace of Allah be upon him)*

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Contents

| | |
|---|---|
| Umar Ibn Al-Khattab: Ancestry and Attributes | 3 |
| Umar ibn Al-Khattab in the Pre-Islamic Society | 4 |
| Converting to Islam | 5 |
| His Migration to Madinah | 7 |
| Selected Instances of Umar's Biography | 7 |
| Revelation of the Qur'an Agreeing With His Opinion | 7 |
| His Asceticism | 8 |
| Abu Bakr's Appointment of Umar as His Successor | 9 |
| The Speech Given by Umar When he Became Caliph | 11 |
| Sayings of Umar that Became Well Known Wisdom | 12 |
| His Advice to the Army | 13 |
| The Martyrdom of Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) | 13 |
| References: | 16 |
| Umar Ibn Al-Khattab in Brief | 18 |

## In the name of Allah most Gracious Most Merciful

Praise be to Allah, and prayers and peace be upon the Prophet Mohammad and his sanctified and dedicated Companions, as well as all their followers till the Day of Judgment.

This is the third issue within the series of *Men and Women Around Mohammad (prayers and peace of Allah be upon him)*. It considers the personality and era of Al Farooq Umar Ibn Al-Khattab, the second caliph and the best of the noble Companions after Abu Bakr Al-Seddiq may Allah be pleased with them all.

The life of Al Farooq Umar Ibn Al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him) is a shining page of Islamic history, which outshines and supersedes all other histories. The history of all nations put together does not contain even a part of what his life contained of noble conduct, glory, sincerity, jihad, and calling others for the sake of Allah. To present this issue we began to review his life and times in the reference books and resources, and we analyzed it, verified it and put it in order so that it would become accessible to the readers, so that they may benefit from it in their lives by following his example, and that Allah may bestow upon them success in this world and in the Hereafter.

## Umar Ibn Al-Khattab: Ancestry and Attributes

His full name was Umar ibn Al-Khattab ibn Nufayl ibn Abdul-Uzza. He was known as Abu Hafs and earned the nickname of Al Farooq (the Criterion) because he showed his Islam openly in Makkah and through him Allah distinguished between disbelief and faith.  was born in 583 AC, thirteen years after the year of the Elephant. His father was Al-Khattab ibn Nufayl, and his grandfather Nufayl was one of those whom Quraysh used to refer for judgment. His mother was Hantamah bint Hashim bin Al Mugheerah.

With regard to his physical characteristics, he was white with a reddish complexion. He was muscular, tall, solid and bald. He was very strong, not weak or puny. When he walked, he walked quickly, when he spoke, he spoke clearly, and when he stuck, he caused pain (Al-Sayed,1996).

**Umar ibn Al-Khattab in the Pre-Islamic Society**

Umar spent half of his life in the pre-Islamic society 'Jahiliyah', and grew up like his peers of Quraysh, except that he has an advantage over them in that he was one of those who had learned to read, of whom there were very few. He bore responsibility at an early age, and had a very harsh upbringing in which he knew no type of luxury or manifestation of wealth. His father Al-Khattab forced him to tend his camels. His father's harsh treatment had a negative effect on Umar which he remembered all his life. Undoubtedly, this job -tending livestock- which was the constant work of Umar in Makkah, before he entered Islam, caused him to acquire good characteristics, such as forbearance, patience and toughness. But tending sheep was not the only work that the son of Al-Khattab did during the pre-Islamic era (Ibraheem, 2005: 226).

From his early youth he also excelled in many kinds of sports, such as wrestling, riding and horsemanship. He enjoyed and narrated poetry, and he was interested in the history and affaires of his people. He was keen to attend the great fairs of the Arabs, such as Ukaz, Mijannah and Dhu al-Majaz, where he would make the most of the opportunity to engage in trade and learn the history of the Arabs, and the battles and contests that had taken place among the tribes. Besides, he engaged in trade and profited, which made him one of the rich men of Makkah. He became acquainted with many people in the countries that he visited for the purpose of trade. He travelled to Syria in the summer and Yemen in the winter. Thus, he occupied a prominent position in Makkan society during the pre-Islamic era, and played an effective role in shaping events. He was

assisted by the outstanding history of his forefathers. His grandfather Nufayl ibn Abdul-Uzza was one to whom Quraysh referred their disputes for judgment, and his ancestor Kaab was held in high esteem by the Arabs. They had recorded their history from the year of his death until the event of the Elephant. Umar inherited this status from his forefathers which brought him a great deal of knowledge about the life and circumstances of the Arabs, in addition to his own smartness and intelligence. So they would come to him to resolve their disputes (Al-Ani & Zaien, 1989: 16).

Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) was wise, eloquent, well spoken, strong, tolerant, noble, persuasive and clear of speech, which made him qualified to be an ambassador for Quraysh, to speak up for them before the other tribes. Ibn al-Jawzi said: the role of ambassador fell to Umar ibn Al-Khattab. If there was a war between Quraysh and another tribe, they would send him as an ambassador, and if another tribe was boasting against them, they would send him to respond in kind, and they were pleased with him (Ibn Al-Jawzi, 2001: 11).

Umar lived during the pre-Islamic era and knew it inside out. He knew its true nature, its customs and traditions, and he defended it with all the power he possessed. Therefore, when he entered Islam he understood its beauty and true nature, and he recognized the great difference between guidance and misguidance, disbelief and faith, truth and falsehood, and he spoke his famous words: "The bonds of Islam will be undone one by one when there will be a generation brought up in Islam who do not know what ignorance is" (Aashour, 1998: 144).

**Converting to Islam**

The first ray of the light of faith that touched his heart came on when he saw the women of Quraysh leaving their homeland and travelling to a distant land because of the persecution that they were facing from Umar and other unbelievers. His

conscious was moved, and he felt remorse and pity for them, and he spoke kind words to them which they had never expected to hear from his person beforehand (Tantawi, 1983:12).

Umm Abdullah bint Hantamh said: when we were migrating to Abyssinia, Umar, who used to persecute us mercilessly, came and stood over and said to me: are you leaving? I said: Yes, for you have persecuted us and oppressed us, and by Allah we are going out in the land of Allah until Allah grants us a way out. Then Umar said: may Allah be with you. And I saw kindness that I had never seen before.

Umar was moved by this woman's attitude and he felt distressed. How much suffering the followers of this new religion were putting up with, but despite that they were standing firm. What was the secret beyond this extraordinary strength? He felt sad and his heart was filled with pain (Al-Sharqawi, 1988: 9). Shortly after this incident, Umar became Muslim as a result of the prayers of the messenger Mohammad (prayers and peace be upon him), which was the main reason for his acceptance of Islam. The Prophet Mohammad had prayed for him saying: "Oh Allah, support Islam with the more beloved of these two men to You: Abu Jahl ibn Hisham or Umar ibn Al Khattab". And the more beloved of them to Allah was Umar (Al-Tirmidhi, 1978: 3682).

Umar became Muslim in Dhu al-Hijjah of the sixth year of the Prophet-hood, when he was twenty-seven years old. He accepted Islam three days after Hamzah, the Prophet's uncle. At that time the Muslims numbered thirty-nine. Umar said: "I remember that when I became Muslim, there were just thirty-nine men with the Messenger of Allah (prayers and peace be upon him), and I brought the number to forty." Thus, Allah caused His religion to prevail and grant glory to Islam (Al-Suyuti, 1997: 137).

Abdullah Ibn Mas'ood said: "We felt a sense of pride when Umar became Muslim, for we could not circumambulate the Holy Mosque and pray, until Umar became Muslim. When he became Muslim, he fought them until they sent us free. Then we prayed and circumambulated the Ka'bah." He also said: "Umar's becoming a Muslim was a victory, his migration was help, and his caliphate was a mercy. We could not pray or circumambulate the House until Umar became Muslim. When he became Muslim, he fought the unbelievers until they left us alone and let us pray." (Ibn Sa'ad, V.3:269)

**His Migration to Madinah**

When Umar decided migrate to Madinah, he insisted on doing so openly. Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) said: "Ali bin Abi Talib said to me: 'I do not know of any of the migrants who did not migrate in secret, except Umar ibn Al-Khattab. When he decided to migrate, he put on his sword, put his bow over his shoulder, picked up his arrows and carried his stick. He went out to the Ka'bah, where a number of Quraysh were gathered in its courtyard, and circumambulated the House seven times, at a leisurely pace. Then he went to the Maqam and prayed tranquilly. Then he went to the circles of people, one by one, and said to them, 'May your faces become ugly! Allah will only rub theses noses in the dust. Whoever wants his mother to be bereft of him and his children to become orphans and his wife to become a widow, let him meet me behind this valley,' 'Ali said, 'No one followed him except a few of those who were weak and oppressed. He taught them and told them about Islam, then he went on his way.' " (Al-Sayed, 1996: 30).

**Selected Instances of Umar's Biography**

**Revelation of the Qur'an Agreeing With His Opinion**

Narrated Anas: that Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) said, "I had the same idea as Allah in three things: I said, 'O

Allah's Messenger! I wish that you take the station of Ibrahim as a place of prayer.' So Allah revealed:

*"And take you (people) the Maqam (place) of Ibrahim* [or the stone on which Ibrahim stood while he was building the Ka'bah] *as a place of prayer." (Al-Baqarah: 125)*

He also said, 'O Allah's Messenger! (prayers and Peace be upon him) Good and bad people enter upon your wives, I wish that you order them to cover themselves with veils.' So the verses of Al-Hijab (i.e. veiling of the women) were revealed. The wives of the Prophet (prayers and Peace be upon him) gathered against him and I said to them: 'It may be If he divorced you (all) that his Lord will give him instead of you, wives better than you.' Thereupon Allah revealed a verse with similar wordings." (Al-Bukhari and Muslim).

**His Asceticism**

Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) was most humble to Allah and led an austere life. His food was very coarse and he would patch his cloth with leather. He used to carry a water skin on his shoulders in spite of his great esteem. He used to laugh little and never joked with anyone. Engraved on his ring was: "Death is sufficient as an admonition, O' Umar."

When he was appointed as the Caliph, he said: "Nothing is permissible (for me) from the treasury more than two clothes, one for the cold season and the other for the dry season. The sustenance of my family will be the equivalent of an average man of Quraish and not the rich amongst them, for I am just an ordinary man among the Muslims (i.e. nothing special about me)."

O' Creator of these men, glory be to you. See what the Qur'an did to the soul of these people. Return your gaze, dear readers, and see the condition of the Caliph and what was sufficient for him. May Allah bless the right religion that groomed them and may He bless the Prophet that taught them.

Mu'awiyah ibn Abu Sufyan (one of the Companions, may Allah bless him) said: "As for Abu Bakr, he never desired the world and the world did not desire him. As for Umar, the world desired him but he never desired the world. As for us, we have been soiled by the world inside-out."

At the time of drought, Umar (may Allah be pleased with him), ate bread and oil until his skin turned pale dark and he would say: "What a bad leader I am if I eat my fill and the people go hungry." (Ibn Katheer, 1988, V.5: 214).

**Abu Bakr's Appointment of Umar as His Successor**

When Abu Bakr's sickness grew intense, the people gathered around him and he said: "There has befallen me what you see and I think I am going to die soon. Allah has freed you from your oath of alliance to me, and your oath is no longer binding. Your affairs are in your hands, so appoint over you whomever you like. If you appoint someone whilst I am still alive, I think it is less likely that you will become divided after I am gone." (Ibn Katheer, 1988, V.7:18).

The Companions consulted one another, each of them trying to refuse the position of Caliph for himself and seeking it for his brother whom he thought was fit and qualified for it. Hence they came back to him and said: "We have decided to leave it to you, O' Successor of the Messenger of Allah." He said: "Give me time so that I may choose someone who will be most pleasing to Allah, most protective of His religion and His slaves.

Abu Bakr wanted to tell the people himself whilst he was conscious and aware of what he was saying, so that there would be no confusion. So he looked out over the people and said to them: "Do you accept the one whom I appoint as your leader? For by Allah I have tried to appoint the best; I have not appointed a relative. I have appointed as your leader Umar ibn al-Khattab, so listen to him and obey." They said: "We will listen and obey." Then Abu Bakr turned in supplicating to Allah,

expressing his concern to his Lord. He said: "I have appointed him not by the command of Your Prophet, seeking nothing but what is in their best interests. I fear sedition for them and I have thought long and hard about the matter. I have appointed over them the best of them and the one who is most keen to lead them in the right way. Now here I am with Your decree about to be fulfilled. Take care of them after I am gone for they are Your salves."

Umar inb al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with his) started to act as the caliph of the Muslims as soon as Abu Bakr passed away (Al-Shuja'a, 1999: 272).

It may be noted that Abu Bakr's nomination of Umar ibn al-Khattab could not have made him caliph unless it was based on the consent of the majority. This was achieved when Abu Bakr asked the people to look themselves for a successor to take the reins of leadership after he died. They put the matter back in his hands and said, we will follow your opinion. But Abu Bakr did not nominate Umar until he consulted the most prominent Companions. He asked each one individually, and when he realized that they all agree, he announced his nomination of Umar. So Abu Bakr's choice was based on the general opinion of the community as expressed through its most prominent figures. Nonetheless, this nomination could not make Umar the caliph except with the community's consent, as the election of the ruler is the entire right of the public, and the role of the caliph is to act as an agent on behalf of the community. His words indicate that the community is responsible to control its own affairs (Al-Keelani, 1997: 172).

Hence, we see that the appointment of Umar was done in accordance with the most sound and fair principles of Consultation 'Shura'.

Hence, Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) succeeded Abu Bakr as a second Caliph on August 23, 634 AD.

Corresponding 22 of Jumad 2$^{nd}$, 13 AH. Umar was an expert jurist and is best known for his justice, in the same way for Muslims and non-Muslims. This value earned him the title of Al-Farooq (the one who distinguishes between wright and wrong) (Shabaro, 1995).

He was the first Caliph to be nominated as "Prince of the Believers". He is the one who founded the Lunar Calendar (Hijri), (i.e. according to the date of Prophet Mohammad's migration to Medinah). In his era Islam gained a great position, as the Islamic Empire expanded at an unprecedented rate ruling the whole Iraq, Egypt, Libya, Tripoli, Persia, Khurassan, Eastern Anatolia, South Armenian and Sajistan. Umar is the first one who conquered Jerusalem to be within the Muslim Empire, as it is the first Qiblah and the third holiest city in Islam. Thus, the Islamic Empire ruled the whole Sassanid Persian Empire and more than two thirds of the Eastern Roman Empire. His attacks against the Sassanid Persian Empire resulted in the conquest of the Persian Empire in less than two years. His political wisdom and administrative ability were demonstrated in protecting the unity of the state in spite of its growing scope and the increasing population of varied ethnicity.

**The Speech Given by Umar When he Became Caliph**

It was reported that two days after Umar was appointed as caliph, the people started talking and saying how worried they were about his harshness punishments, so Umar realized that he had to clarify the matter himself. He ascended the rostrum (minbar) and addressed them, describing how the Prophet (prayers and peace be upon him) and Abu Bakr had been pleased with Umar when they died. Then he said:

"I have been appointed as your leader, O' people, so understand that this harshness has become less, and it will only be applied to wrongdoers and oppressors. I will not permit anyone to oppress anyone else or to transgress the rights of

others, but I will put his cheek on the ground and until he submit to the truth. In contrast to that former harshness of mine, I will lay my own cheek on the ground before those who are humble and modest. O' people, I make some promises to you, which I will mention so that you will hold me to them. I promise that I will not take anything of your taxes or of the booty (faya') that Allah grants to you, except in the proper manner. I promise you that whatever I take, I will not spend it except in the proper manner. I promise you that I will increase your stipends, if Allah wills, and I will protect your boarders. I promise you that I will not throw you into dangerous places or keep you away from your families for a long time in order to guard the boarders. When you are away in military campaigns, I will be responsible for your children until you come back.

Fear Allah O' slaves of Allah, and try to help me by keeping your evil away from me and by enjoining what is good and what is evil and by giving me sincere advice with regard to the way I am running your affairs. I say these words of mine and I ask Allah to forgive me and you." (Majdalawi, 1998: 106).

From this speech we can perceive clearly the method that Umar followed in his rule, from which he never deviated.

**Sayings of Umar that Became Well Known Wisdom**

Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) said: "Whoever concealed his secrets will have the choice (of telling whomever he wants to tell), but whoever speaks or acts in a specious manner should not blame anyone who thinks badly of him. Do not think badly of a word spoken by your brother (fellow) when you can still find good ways to interpret it. Think positively of your brother until you are certain that he is not like that. Do not swear a great deal lest Allah humiliate you. There is no better reward for one who disobeys Allah concerning you that your obeying Allah concerning him. You should seek sincere friends and maintain good relations with them, for they are a pleasure at

times of ease and a support at times of hardship." (Ibn Asaker, 1987, V44:359).

These are well-expressed wisdom from which we may learn a great deal.

**His Advice to the Army**

Whenever Umar sent forth an army he would advise them to fear Allah. Then he would say when the standard of war is hoisted: 'In the name of Allah and upon the help of Allah, proceed with the backing of Allah and His support. Adhere to truth and patience. Fight in the cause of Allah against those who disbelieve in Allah and do not disobey, for Allah does not like the disobedient. Do not be coward at the time of meeting (the enemy) and do not mutilate when you have the upper hand, and do not be immoderate when you conquer. Do not argue during fighting.

'Do not kill women, the aging, and the children. Avoid killing them when two enemies meet and in the heat of attack (in front of your enemy). Do not go to the extreme with regard to spoils of war, distance (your intention for) the sacred war –Jihad- from seeking with it worldly honors, and rejoice at the profit that you have gained from the transaction you have entered. That is indeed the great success (Al-Baltaji, 2006).

**The Martyrdom of Umar (may Allah be pleased with him)**

After the blessed journey of life that Umar undertook in Islam, in which the earth was subjected to him. During his era the flag of monotheism was hoisted at full mast in many territories, such as Iraq, Tripoli, Jordan, Ahwaz, Nahawind, Khurassan, Palestine, the East, Egypt and many other places. Now it is time for the traveler to go home and to attain the goal for which he lived and for which he died.

Imam ibn Kathir said: "When Umar concluded his rites of Hajj in the year 23 of Hijrah, he made a stopover in a valley. He

prayed to Allah and cried to Him that he has become very old and weak, meanwhile, his care and worries (the territories) have spread wide and he is afraid of deterioration. So he asked Allah to take him to Himself and to grant him martyrdom in the land of the Prophet (prayers and peace be upon him) just as it is narrated in the Sahih that he used to say: 'Oh Allah! I ask you for martyrdom in Your cause and death in the land of Your Messenger.'" (Al-Bukhari, 3/ 30).

Allah accepted his prayers and combined there two requests for him, and this was undoubtedly a great achievement. Allah indeed kind to whom He wishes. It happened that Abu Lu'lu Al-Fayruz, the Magian (the fire worshiper), who had a roman origin, stabbed Umar while he was in the dawn prayer (al-fajr) with a dagger of two blades. He stabbed him three times, one of these below the naval. Hence, Umar (may Allah be pleased with him), fell down bleeding copiously.

He asked Abdulrahman bin Awf to replace him to conclude the prayer. Abu Lu'lu, who was a nonbeliever, withdrew with his dagger but kept stabbing whoever came his way in the mosque until he stabbed thirteen people out of which six died as a result of their injuries. Abdullah bin Awf threw his robe on him and when he realized that he was going to be overpowered, Abu Lu'lu stabbed himself to death (may Allah's curse be upon him).

Umar (may Allah be pleased with him), was taken to his house with blood gushing out from his wound. All of these occurred before sunrise. He kept passing in and out of consciousness. Then they reminded him of the prayer and he came round and said, "Truly! He is not fortunate, in Islam, whoever abounds it." Then he prayed at its time (Ibn Katheer, 1988, V.5: 217).

Then Umar asked: "Who killed me?" they replied, "Abu Lu'lua, the Magian." Then Umar was delighted, and said: "Praise be to Allah who Has not afflicted me from the hands of someone who subscribes to monotheism. I used to forbid you from

sending to us any uncouth infidel but you disobeyed me." Then he said: "Call for my brothers." They asked: "Who?" He said: "Uthman, Ali, Talhah, Zubayr, Abdulrahman bin Awf, and Sa'd bin Abi Waqqas." So they were sent for.

When they arrived, Umar said: I have looked into the affairs of the Muslims and I found you six the foremost and the smart. I do not see the authority fitting for anyone except one of you. If you are upright, then the affair of the people will be upright. If there is disagreement, it is because you had disagreed (amongst yourselves)." His blood was mopped for him, and he said: "Consult for three days, and in the meantime, Suahyb should lead the people in prayer." They asked: "Who should we consult with, O' Prince of believers?" He replied: "Consult with the Immigrants and the Supporters as well as the commanders of the armies."

He requested for a drink of milk. When he drank it, the whiteness of the milk could be seen oozing out from his wounds and it was clear for them that he would die. He said: "The time is now (i.e. of death). If I were to have the entire world, I would have given it out to ransom myself from the horror of the point of departure." Then, his soul was taken. This happened on Wednesday 26-12- 23 of Al Hejra, corresponding to 7$^{th}$ of November 644 AC. He was sixty three years old and his era extended for ten years.

Abdullah ibn Mas'ud said about him: "Umar was to us an invulnerable forte in Islam. People would enter into the fold of Islam and they would not come out of it. Unfortunately, our forte has been compromised and people are going out of it and they are not returning to it." (Al-Tabarani, 14466).

*Peace be upon Umar ibn al-Khattab for eternity.*

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**Umar Ibn Al-Khattab in Brief**

He is Umar ibn Al-Khattab ibn Nufayl. He was known as Abu Hafs and earned the nickname of Al Farooq (the Criterion) because he showed his Islam openly in Makkah and through him Allah distinguished between disbelief and faith. Besides, he was the first Caliph to be nominated as the "Prince of the Believers".

Umar was born in 583 AC, thirteen years after the year of the Elephant. He was very strong, not weak or puny. When he walked, he walked quickly, when he spoke, he spoke clearly, and when he stuck, he caused pain.

Umar became Muslim in Dhu al-Hijjah of the sixth year of the Prophet-hood, when he was twenty-seven years old. And when he decided migrate to Madinah, he insisted on doing so openly. Umar was most humble to Allah and led an austere life, his food was very coarse. Engraved on his ring was: "Death is sufficient as an admonition, O' Umar".

Umar succeeded Abu Bakr as a second Caliph on August 23, 634 AD. Corresponding 22 of Jumad 2$^{nd}$, 13 AH. Umar was an expert jurist and is best known for his justice, in the same way for Muslims and non-Muslims.

He is the one who founded the Lunar Calendar (Hijri), and in his era Islam gained a great position.

He was granted martyrdom; it happened that Abu Lu'lu Al-Fayruz, the Magian, who had a roman origin, stabbed Umar while he was in the dawn prayer (al-fajr) with a dagger of two blades. Soon his soul was taken. This happened on Wednesday 26-12- 23 AH, corresponding to 7$^{th}$ of November 644 AC. He was sixty-three years old and his era extended for ten years.

God bless Umar Ibn Al-Khattab and be pleased with him.

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